2 Southern University Professors Fired

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BATON ROUGE, La., Nov. 1 — Two Southern University faculty members associated with a student protest movement were fired today by university president G. Leon Netterville.

There were reliable reports that at least four other letters of dismissal had been prepared.

It was the first move to alter the volatile conditions on the 9,000-student, predominantly black main campus since two students were killed Thursday in a tear gas filled confrontation with sheriff's deputies and state police.

Gov. Edwin W. Edwards said in an interview that when the school's two biggest campuses in Baton Rouge and New Orleans reopen the Monday after Thanksgiving, order will be enforced "by whatever means are necessary," including placing National Guard troops on the campuses if needed.

"This is going to sound terrible, but we'll do it by whatever means are necessary," the governor said. "We are going to open the campus. The teachers will all be there ... those students that want to go to class will go. Those that lift their fingers to throw a brick or a bottle will get moved off."

Immediately after the deaths, Edwards ordered the campus closed until after Thanksgiving and called out National Guard troops to seal it off.

The killings climaxed a month of steady campus turmoil revolving around demands for better facilities, better teaching, student control over all university departments, and the firing of president Netterville.

The two professors receiving notices of dismissal were Dr. Joseph Johnson, chairman of the physics department, and George W. Baker Jr., an assistant professor of engineering. Both had been close to the leaders of Students United, an umbrella campus organization running the latest in a string of campus protests that stretch back more than a decade.

Baker said his letter of dismissal, mailed Friday, read in part:

"By serving as adviser to the dissident students, you have been instrumental in promoting activities which disrupted the normal educational process of the university."

Protesting students had suggested that Johnson replace Netterville as university president. Baker had appeared before the state board of education, which governs Southern University, to argue on the students behalf.

"In a grotesque and perverted attempt to deflect blame for this massacre, Dr. Netterville accuses we faculty members of not meeting classes," Johnson said. "Black people know whose hands are bloody . . . Mr. Netterville knows that I have not encouraged disruption. I simply encouraged him to resign."

Baker declined comment.

The governor said he was convinced at first that the student protest leaders wanted to improve Southern University, the nation's largest black college complex. But after negotiating with them, Edwards said, he became convinced they would not call off the protest until they gained control over the school.

During the nine days he allowed New Orleans campus students to occupy the administration building, Edwards said, the student leaders repeatedly changed the conditions under which they were willing to leave.

"Every time we agreed to what they said, they would say that is not what we want, we want something else," the governor said. "Finally they said they would never go back to class and never let anyone else go back to class until Netterville was fired and students had control of the campus."

That was the point, the governor said, when he decided further negotiations would be useless, and he disbanded the 23-member special committee, all but two of its members black, that he had named to work on ending the protests.

The governor admitted he made another mistake when he described to a news conference Friday the events surrounding the two students' death.

His statement that president Netterville had advance information of an administration building takeover was wrong, Edwards said, caused by his inadvertently mixing two conversations in his memory.

Earlier, after flatly stating the two students were not killed by law enforcement officers, Edwards admitted he could not make that flat statement.

Students have complained for years that Louisiana's dual system of education shortchanges its formerly all black colleges in money and facilities. These schools remain overwhelmingly black today.

There are a number of student, faculty, and black community leaders, however, who oppose recent moves towards integrating the Southern University system with the primarily white Louisiana State University system on grounds that when schools are integrated in the South the black traditions, cultures and control always seem to disappear.